

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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R 011530Z MAR 76

FM AMEMBASSY ANKARA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2619

INFO AMEMBASSY ATHENS

AMEMBASSY NICOSIA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMCONSUL ADANA

AMCONSUL ISTANBUL

AMCONSUL IZMIR

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, TU

SUBJ: DEMIREL GOVERNMENT PASSES ANOTHER TEST

REF: ANKARA 1577(NOTAL)

1. AFTER A MONTH OF DEBATE IN THE SENATE AND NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, THE DEMIREL GOVERNMENT BUDGET RECEIVED FINAL APPROVAL OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY FEBRUARY 28 BY A VOTE OF 231-205. ALL DEPUTIES OF THE FOUR COALITION PARTIES WERE PRESENT AND VOTED FOR THE BUDGET. ELEVEN INDEPENDENTS ALSO SUPPORTED THE GOVERNMENT. ON THE OPPOSITION SIDE, SEVEN DEMOCRATIC PARTY (DP) MEMBERS AND FIVE REPUBLICAN PEOPLE'S PARTY (RPP) MEMBERS DID NOT PARTICIPATE. THE REASON FOR THE NON-PARTICIPATION OF THE RPP DEPUTIES IS NOT YET CLEAR BUT A SPOKESMAN FOR THE SEVEN DP DEPUTIES ANNOUNCED THAT THEY WOULD NOT VOTE TO BRING DOWN THE GOVERNMENT WHEN THERE WAS NO ALTERNATIVE IN SIGHT. PRIMIN DEMIREL, WHO HAD CAREFULLY REFRAINED FROM DOING SO

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PRIOR TO SATURDAY'S DECISION, IMMEDIATELY CLAIMED THAT THE

VICTORY REPRESENTED A VOTE OF CONFIDENCE FOR HIS GOVERNMENT. HE THANKED THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY FOR THE SHOW OF CONFIDENCE AND PROMISED TO STAY IN OFFICE AS LONG AS SUCH CONFIDENCE CONTINUED.

2. NEWS OF THE DEMIREL GOVERNMENT VICTORY WAS RIVALLED IN THE PRESS FEBRUARY 29, HOWEVER, BY THE NEWS THAT AN ARREST WARRANT HAD BEEN ISSUED FOR THE PRIMIN'S NEPHEW, YAHYA DEMIREL, IN CONNECTION WITH ALLEGED ILLEGAL TAX REBATES. THE OPPOSITION PARTIES (AND PRESS), WHICH HAD EARLIER HOPED TO BRING DOWN THE DEMIREL GOVERNMENT ON THE BUDGET ISSUE, HAVE NOW FOCUSED THEIR ANTI-GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON THE ALLEGATIONS OF CORRUPTION CLOSE TO DEMIREL. THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY HAS FOREGONE THE RECESS IT TRADITIONALLY TAKES AFTER PASSING THE BUDGET IN ORDER TO TAKE UP SEVERAL INVESTIGATIVE MOTIONS AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT, INCLUDING ONE CONCERNING THE YAHYA DEMIREL CASE. FEBRUARY 28 REPUBLICAN RELIANCE PARTY (RR) CHAIRMAN AND DEPUTY PRIMIN FEYZIOGLU ANNOUNCED HIS PARTY WOULD OPPOSE RECESS PRIOR TO FORMATION OF INVESTIGATIVE COMMISSIONS TO LOOK INTO THE YAHYA DEMIREL AND LOCKHEED CASES. WITH RR SUPPORT THE INVESTIGATIVE COMMISSIONS SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED WITHOUT MUCH DEBATE WHEN THE ASSEMBLY MEETS MARCH 2.

3. COMMENT: THE 26-VOTE MARGIN ON THE BUDGET BILL REPRESENTS THE HIGH WATER MARK FOR THE DEMIREL GOVERNMENT DURING ITS ELEVEN MONTHS IN POWER. THE INABILITY OF THE OPPOSITION TO MOUNT AN EFFECTIVE CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT ON THE BUDGET ISSUE HAS SEEMINGLY HAD A DEMORALIZING EFFECT ON THE RPP. REPORTS ARE CIRCULATING OF INCREASED INTRA-PARTY STRIFE. THERE HAS ALSO BEEN SPECULATION THAT THE SINGLE-MINDED CONCENTRATION BY THE RPP ON EFFORTS TO BRING DOWN THE DEMIREL GOVERNMENT IS HAVING A NEGATIVE EFFECT ON ECEVIT'S PUBLIC IMAGE. NEVERTHELESS, THERE IS SOME INDICATION THAT DEMIREL'S NEPHEW HAS INDEED BEEN INVOLVED IN TAX IRREGULARITIES AND THE RPP HOPES IT CAN CONVERT PUBLIC REACTION AGAINST THE CONDUCT OF HIS NEPHEW INTO POLITICAL DEFEAT FOR DEMIREL. HOWEVER, THE ALLEGED CRIMINAL ACTIVITY OCCURRED DURING THE TIME OF THE ECEVIT AND IRMAK GOVERNMENTS AND THE RPP WILL HAVE A DIFFICULT TASK IN DEMONSTRATING THAT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THE DEMIREL GOVERNMENT TOOK "COVER-UP" MEASURES TO FORESTALL INVESTIGATION OF THE ALLEGED IRREGULARITIES. DEMIREL HAS PREVIOUSLY BEEN TARNISHED BY SIMILAR SCANDALS INVOLVING HIS BROTHERS AND HE MANAGED TO SURVIVE. ALTHOUGH DEMIREL'S POSITION WILL CERTAINLY NOT BE STRENGTHENED BY PUBLIC WASHING OF THE FAMILY LINEN, WE DO NOT BELIEVE THE RPP CAN COUNT ON A GROUNDSWELL OF MORAL INDIGNATION TO BRING HIS GOVERNMENT DOWN. MACOMBER

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